the approach of the mystic. Buddhism, too, with its many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with its conceptions of heaven and hell, and with the art forms which came with it, both stimulated the imagination and provided it with subjects. Buddhism, moreover, was impressed with the impermanence of life—a note of sadness which runs through much of the T'ang poetry. On the other hand, the fact must be included that some of the greatest of the poets were of the orthodox Confucian school and were scornful of both Buddhism and Taoism. Unquestionably, also, the order and the prosperity which the T'ang gave the country afforded opportunity for the arts of civilization.

A technical discussion of Chinese verse would presuppose a knowledge of the Chinese language and would be both confusing and boring to the average Occidental reader. It need not, therefore, be entered upon here. This much must be said, however. To rhyme and length of line, which the older poetry had stressed, the T'ang added emphasis on tone, a practice begun in the centuries of disunion. As in prose, form and style were greatly prized, and it was in the originality and perfection of these that the T'ang poetic genius best expressed itself. In the ninth century, moreover, the songs of popular entertainers and of dancing girls led to a new type of verse which was to flourish for four centuries or so. The songs were written to go with popular tunes, had irregular lines, and so displayed more melody and greater variety than the older orthodox poetry. The subjects and sentiments of T'ang poems often harked back to those of preceding dynasties, but there was also a widening of the range of themes. Among the

favorite topics were battle, a deserted concubine, the emotions aroused by a landscape, friendship, the meeting and parting of friends, a ruin, the song of birds, the moonlight, and wine. Translations of Buddhist poetry, moreover, exerted a marked influence.

The two most famous poets of the dynasty, and usually deemed the greatest in all Chinese literature, were Li Po and Tu Fu.

Li Po was probably, although not certainly, born in the far West, The year seems to have been between 699 and 705. Most of his life he was a wanderer. In his youth he was something of a swashbuckler, and always he was fond of wine. At one period he retired to a mountain as a member of a gay group dubbed the "Six Idlers